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HISTORY OF MEAT GRADING

By

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Meat grading by the U.S. Government according to a definite grading system dates back to January 1923 when a government agency required the beef purchases on contract to be of uniform quality.

The U.S. Shipping Board was purchasing supplies of meats of various kinds for the emergency fleet and other United States owned vessels. Because they were experiencing difficulty in procuring the desired uniform quality of beef it prepared its contract specifications according to the tentative U.S. grade standards for beef, and requested the B.A.E. to grade the beef purchased under such contracts. This was the beginning of a beef grading service which was later expanded to include other meats and meat products.

Although this example illustrates the desires of a single agency for a standard grading system, it was typical of the growing demand for uniform official standards for livestock and meat grading, throughout the livestock and meat industry as well as the consuming public. This demand had been manifested through complaints from individuals and various organizations as well as the U.S. Congress for a number of years. For example, a similar demand for a uniform livestock reporting system had caused Congress to pass a law in 1916 establishing a national Livestock Market News Service, so that livestock producers and others

might have an adequate unbiased daily livestock market report. Producers and others believed that daily market reports by a government agency would aid them in selecting a market for disposing of their livestock to better advantage. Furthermore, they felt the need of an accurate guide in producing the kind of meat that was in greatest demand. Consumers in all sections were continually being disappointed with their meat purchases and demanded some means by which they could determine high grade meat from that of the lower grades.

The lack of uniform standards had caused much misunderstanding, confusion, suspicion and, in some cases, material losses, and every instance tended to increase the demand for the adoption of uniform national standards. The outgrowth of these broad demands was the preparation of a set of beef grade standards by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These standards were based on those formulated by the Illinois State Experiment Station and those used by the meat industry at that time. These tentative beef grade standards, prepared by C. V. Whalen and W. C. Davis, entitled "Market Classes and Grades of Beef" and published as Department Bulletin 1246, were the first grade standards issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In these standards were embodied the fundamental principles of meat grading. The preparation of these standards in 1921-22 in tentative form immediately preceded the beginning of the meat grading service. The first meat grading was inaugurated in January 1923, when the U.S. Shipping Board requested the Livestock, Meats and Wool Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to grade beef carcasses according to tentative U.S. Standards.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture had no funds available with which to pay the meat graders' salaries and expenses, when the meat grading

service was inaugurated; consequently, it was necessary for the U.S. Shipping Board to pay the expenses of the service. This was accomplished by transferring funds from the Shipping Board's account to the B.A.E. account. The charge made for the service was \$2.00 per hour for the time required to do the grading. Most of the grading that was done during 1923 and the first half of 1924 was for the Shipping Board. Although beef was the principal meat graded in the beginning, the service was so satisfactory that soon all other meat purchases were included. Therefore, in 1925 the items graded were:

	(Beef
	(Veal
Fresh and Frozen	(Lamb
	(Mutton
	(Pork
	(Corned Meats
Other Items	(Cured Meats
	(Smoked Meats
	(Lard - Lard Sub.
	(Kosher Products
Other Items	(Fish
	(Poultry and Game

During 1924 the service was extended to include the Childs' Restaurants. As other agencies, companies and institutions became acquainted with the benefits and requirements of the service, more requests were received to extend the service. Other steamship companies, railroads, large hotels first requested the service. This was followed by requests from Federal, State and county hospitals and other government institutions. Still later it was followed by requests from chain stores, retail meat dealers and others.

All of the service was conducted on a fee basis. The fees collected from the government agencies could be used in paying salaries and expenses

of the graders but the funds (fees) collected from commercial concerns had to be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

This work was authorized under the U.S. Agriculture Products Inspection and Grading Act passed by Congress. As this new service was being tried by numerous companies, agencies and institutions, information relative to its benefits and successful prosecution was continually being issued in the form of news articles, livestock and meat exhibits, bulletins, large colored posters, and lectures. Meat cutting and livestock and meat grading demonstrations were being conducted before large gatherings of interested groups. All of this activity intensified the interest in meat grading and caused more and more people to become interested in having it extended so that the average consumer would receive the benefits from it. Previous to this time the beef grade standards and the method of applying them had merely been tested to determine their workability and whether they were satisfactory to those using them. The grading results indicated that they could be used satisfactorily at any market.

After the grading service had continued for more than two years, it was deemed advisable to secure the reaction of the livestock and meat trade interests relative to the advisability of establishing national standards at all markets for livestock and meat grades. In the summer and fall of 1925, therefore, hearings were held in many of the larger market centers for the purpose of discussing the proposed standards and secure the suggestions, criticisms and general comments of the various representative groups. The meetings were held at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Paul, Denver, Portland, San Francisco, Fort Worth, and Chicago. These meetings were well attended by representatives from the

wholesale and retail meat trade, livestock commission firms, packers, livestock extension men, college instructors, producers, livestock reporters and others. Those from the Department in Washington responsible for conduction of the hearings and presenting the subjects for discussion were C. W. Kitchen, C. V. Whalin, W. C. Davis, L. B. Burk, C. E. Gibbons, and J. K. Wallace.

In many of the meetings the standards were freely discussed and valuable suggestions were received. At none of the hearings were serious objections raised. Considerable doubt was manifested as to the possibility of uniform application of such standards but most people agreed that universal standards were advisable. These hearings created widespread interest among the livestock and meat trade interests and especially among the producers of high grade cattle. They began to take steps, therefore, to organize and support a general movement toward the adoption and extensive use of uniform official standards for both livestock and meat.

During the time the hearings were being conducted the National Livestock and Meat Board agreed to cooperate with the government in perfecting a plan for a grading and stamping service to be conducted under government supervision. This was the first organized effort, outside of the government, to establish a beef grading and stamping service. Mr. K. F. Warner of the U.S. Department of Agriculture was selected by the Board to make a survey of the livestock and meat industry and collect data and opinions relative to the need and advisability of such a service. In June 1926, the Board passed the following resolution upon the recommendation of its grading committee composed of Thomas E. Wilson, Chairman, John T. Russell, C. M. O'Donel, F. R. Marshall, and R. M. Gunn.

"Resolved, by the National Livestock and Meat Board, that it is the sense of this Board that in the interest alike of consumer and all branches of the livestock and meat industries, it is desirable that a system of grading and stamping of all federally inspected meats in the carcass, under government supervision, be established with the least possible delay."

The government was then requested by the Board to outline a plan for the inauguration of such a service. Editors of livestock journals and others also became interested in meat grade standards and supported them with editorials and in active participation in livestock meetings and by numerous other means.

One of the most ardent supporters and early pioneers of the meat grading and stamping service was Mr. Alvin H. Sanders, of the Breeders Gazette. He believed that "beef from well fattened cattle of excellent conformation and quality, should be marked as Blue Ribbon beef" so that it could be identified for consumers from low grade beef. Through the columns of the Breeders Gazette he aroused further interest in meat grading and stamping throughout the country. His definite stand for graded beef encouraged other journalists, secretaries of Chambers of Commerce, managers of National Livestock shows and numerous livestock and retail meat dealer associations to take an active part in promoting the meat grading activities so that the general public would have an opportunity to purchase graded beef. Prior to this time the meat grading service had been requested by those who made their purchases on a contract basis and only a small percentage had been purchased by consumers. A stamp at this time for retail cuts was not required.

On June 3, 1926, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture promulgated the beef grade standards as the official U.S. Standards for Market Classes and Grades of Carcass Beef, to become effective July 1, 1926.

On July 22-23 a meeting was held in Kansas City, Missouri, attended by approximately 250 prominent cattle breeders and feeders from all of the leading cattle producing States for the specific purpose of discussing the advisability of grading and stamping the two highest grades (Prime and Choice) of beef and also to form an organization for sponsoring such a service. It was the firm conviction of this group that the grading and stamping of beef carcasses should be put into practice. The organization was named the "Better Beef Association." Mr. Oakleigh Thorne of Mill Brook, N.Y. became its first president. A board of nine members as an executive committee was selected to govern the activities of the organization. It included the following:

Oakleigh Thorne, Chairman, Millbrook, N.Y.
Alvin H. Sanders, Chicago, Ill.
W. N. W. Blaney, Denver, Colo.
Reginald H. Parsons, Seattle, Wash.
R. M. Kleberg, Corpus Christi, Tex.
A. C. Shellenberger, Alma, Nebr.
R. J. Kinzer, Secy., American Hereford Breeders Assn., Kansas City, Mo.
W. H. Tomhave, Secy., Aberdeen Angus Breeders Assn., Chicago, Ill.
F. W. Harding, Ex. Secy., American Shorthorn Breeders Assn., Chicago, Ill.

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J. B. Shaum, Tarkio, Mo.
B. A. Thomas, Shellyville, Ky.
W. H. Tomhave, Chicago, Ill.
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Alvin H. Sanders, Chicago, Ill.
Oakleigh Thorne, Millbrook, N.Y.
Clyde Turkington, Letts, Ia.

The Secretary of Agriculture assured the Better Beef Association that the government would supervise the grading and stamping of beef on an experimental basis for one year, provided some satisfactory agreement could be reached between the producers and packers. In view of this commitment from the government, Mr. Thorne called a meeting of representatives of the packers and producers early in December 1926. At this meeting the packers were represented by Mr. T. H. Ingwersen of Swift and Company, Mr. V. H. Munnecke of Armour and Company, Mr. Wm. Diesing of Cudahy Packing Company, Mr. A. E. Peterson of Wilson and Company and Mr. Homer R. Davison of the Institute of American Meat Packers. The producer representatives were Mr. Oakleigh Thorne, President, Better Beef Association, Mr. Frank W. Harding, General Executive of the American Shorthorn Breeders Association, Mr. R. J. Kinzer, Secretary of the American Hereford Cattle Breeders Association, and Mr. W. H. Tomhave, Secretary of the American Aberdeen Angus Breeders Association.

In the conferences held between representatives of the packers and the Better Beef Association, the packer representatives contended that the grading and stamping of beef was unworkable. The Better Beef Association and the government believed it could be done. The government based its opinion on the results of more than four years' demonstration, during which

time millions of pounds of beef and other meats had been graded satisfactorily. Although the packer representatives were not convinced that the standards would be satisfactory, they agreed to cooperate during the year of experimentation in order to determine the feasibility of the grading and stamping service. The National Livestock and Meat Board was requested to assume the task of developing the project to a workable basis. This was to be accomplished principally through the dissemination of information to the wholesale and retail meat trade and the consuming public in order that everyone would be made acquainted with the benefits of the grading and stamping service. Other methods would be used if deemed advisable for and consistent with its promotion.

The Board met in special session February 15, 1927 to consider the matter. Mr. Thorne addressed the meeting and stated the desires of his association and the packers. The board of directors agreed to take over the work and to lay definite plans for it. On March 1 another meeting was held at which time the Board created a new department in its organization known as the Department of Better Beef Association. Mr. A. T. Edinger was granted a year's leave of absence from the U.S.D.A. to take up the work of this department.

A Committee of the Board on grading and stamping beef was created; the members were: Gov. Charles D. Carey, Chairman, Wyoming; F. Edson White, President, Armour and Company; Everett C. Brown, Commission Company, Chicago; John T. Russell, retail meat dealer, Chicago; W. H. Tomhave, Secretary, American Aberdeen Angus Breeders Association, Chicago.

The government had designed and completed a roller stamping machine through the efforts of J. F. Barghausen and all arrangements were made except a final decision for starting the work.

On March 17th the Secretary of the National Livestock and Meat Board called a meeting of the different agencies interested in the project. Attending this meeting were representatives of the Better Beef Association, the government, the packers and the board. It was at this conference that definite plans were formulated for the development of the service and a date determined for inaugurating it. The general plan as outlined and approved at that time was as follows:

- (1) The government was to grade and stamp prime and choice grade steer and heifer carcasses and cuts free of charge at the place of slaughter.
- (2) The service was to be rendered only after a request had been received by a packer from a customer specifying that his purchases of such quality or grade of beef should bear the government grade stamp.
- (3) The government agreed to station official graders at 10 cities which were agreed upon by those attending the conference. These were Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Joseph, Sioux City, Topeka, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.
- (4) The packers agreed to cooperate to such an extent as to give the service a fair trial and to assist in correcting any of the weak points that existed or might develop during the year.
- (5) The packers also agreed that they would quote this graded commodity on their price lists as government Prime and government Choice beef.
- (6) The packer graders were to select those carcasses which in their opinion were eligible for a grade stamp and final judgment was to be passed by the official government grader before the stamp was to be applied.
- (7) The government agreed to furnish the stamping machines and supervisors. The stamps to be used at the beginning were U.S. Prime Steer, U.S. Prime Heifer, U.S. Choice Steer and U.S. Choice Heifer. It was decided to start the work in about six weeks.
- (8) The beef grading and stamping service was officially inaugurated May 2, 1927.

1,807½ carcasses were graded during the first four weeks the beef grading and stamping service was in effect. This was a very small beginning and somewhat discouraging because the amount graded was much smaller than was anticipated and was relatively smaller than the amount graded in the general meat grading service. It represented an average of about six carcasses per day per supervisor. In the fiscal year 1926-27 approximately 20,000,000 pounds had been graded. The "general meat grading service" was designated

as such because all meat was included and this designation served to distinguish it from the "beef grading and stamping service."

A check was made of each grader's work in an effort to determine the cause of such a small demand for graded beef. It was discovered that very little support for the service was being received from the trade and that some of the packers who had pledged their support for the period of a year were already not fully cooperating. Numerous reports were received by the government which clearly indicated that packer representatives were discouraging the use of government graded and stamped beef. This was done by, (1) increasing the price from one to three cents per pound on graded and stamped carcasses above the price of similar grades of beef not marked; (2) reporting to retailers that stamped government graded beef was not available. Since Prime and Choice beef could not be graded and stamped except as requested, the packers could control the available supply. Furthermore, it was learned that the packers were developing their own grading and stamping system. This development was manifested when Swift and Company began grading and stamping its beef with its own private brands in August following the beginning of the government service May 2, 1927. The grade stamps used were Premium and Select which represented the two top grades. Shortly after this appeared on the market, Armour followed with the grades of Star and Quality, etc. Although this action retarded the early development, it was an indirect admission that the government grading and stamping of beef carcasses was workable and they believed it to be a meritorious service.

It was realized that at the beginning that much of the success of the project would depend upon the potential users of graded beef becoming

familiar with the benefits to be derived from it. Consequently the producers, through their organization (The Better Beef Association and the National Livestock and Meat Board) had adopted a plan of informing the consumers of the new service, how it could be obtained and its value to them. This was first accomplished through the medium of retail stores. The packers submitted a list of cities where they were selling Prime and Choice grade beef. Government employees and secretaries of local retail meat dealers' associations were requested to furnish the names of retailers handling the higher grades of meat.

The first publication by the Board was a pamphlet containing complete information regarding the service in the form of 50 questions and answers; 25,000 copies of this pamphlet were distributed to retailers, packers, railroads, hotels, colleges, government offices, livestock breeding associations, trade papers and magazines. This was sent prior to the inauguration of the service. In June 15,000 copies of a revised edition were printed. This was followed by Bulletins 2, 3, and 4, all published within six months after the service was started. The number 4 bulletin was mailed to 75,000 retailers. Prepared articles were also published in the leading livestock and meat trade journals; large colored meat posters were sent to retailers for display purposes. Addresses, radio talks, meat exhibits and meatcutting demonstrations were all used to emphasize the importance and value of a new national meat grading service.

At the beginning only four large packers signified their intention of making use of the grading service but during the year 33 packers operating 49 plants in the ten selected cities requested the service. The smaller packers learned that the grading and stamping service enabled them to compete with the larger operators on a satisfactory basis. Some of the

opponents did not favor the service because they failed to realize the benefits they could obtain from it. Others opposed it because they knew they would not be able to substitute a low-grade carcass for one of higher grade carrying the U.S. stamp.

The continuous distribution of effective information by both the government and the National Livestock and Meat Board, and enormous consumers' demands for a labeled, high-quality product soon increased requests for the service. Although there were numerous opponents to the service among the wholesale and retail trade, the grading service could not be denied their customers when they continued to demand it. Thus the ultimate result of informing millions of people of a beneficial government service forced opponents of the beef grading service to use it whether they wanted to do so or not.

Both the government and the Better Beef Association made frequent checks on the service to determine why better progress was being made at some plants than at others in order that the service be uniform. In some instances the cause was due to actions of the graders and in others it was the fault of those requesting the service. All graders did not grade exactly alike; some would be too lenient with carcasses that were nearly Prime or Choice, commonly referred to as border-line cases, and others were entirely too strict. Some did everything they could to cooperate with the trade and others were less cooperative in their rigid application of the standards. Such matters, however, were usually corrected with little difficulty by a visit from a supervisor, when both grader and packer fully understood the requirements.

In other cases retailers reported that they could not continue using the graded and stamped beef because they could not obtain a continuous supply. They stated that after they had convinced their customers that government graded Prime and Choice beef was of higher quality than other grades of beef, they could not supply the demand and, therefore, were losing their customers' trade.

As the demand for graded and stamped beef developed and more people became informed of the service, it was evident that the available supply of Choice and Prime grade beef was inadequate. Consequently, on January 1, 1928, it was decided to include beef of the Good grade. This made possible the grading and stamping of a much larger supply and enabled more people, particularly retail meat dealers, to secure the amounts necessary for their trade.

The packer interests requested that the Prime and Choice grades be combined and that the government prepare another standard specification. The National Livestock and Meat Board, therefore, requested the packer committee and the committee of the Better Beef Association to consider the matter and submit a report. The meeting was held December 13, 1927, at which time the suggestion was presented and considered. On December 19, 1927, Chairman W. E. Peterson submitted a report. This committee requested that the Prime and Choice grades be combined and called "Choice" and also that the description of all the grades be materially changed requiring higher quality beef for each standard grade. The changes, however, were not made at that time and the U.S. Standards were maintained.

There was also considerable agitation during that period to make beef grading compulsory through an act of Congress, but the effort failed because it was believed by many that neither the producers nor the trade

were convinced that it should be done without further proof that it was for the best interests of all concerned.

The experimental grading and stamping service continued until June 30, 1928. During the period it was in progress (May 2, 1927 - June 3, 1928) a total of approximately 37,906,687 pounds of beef was graded and stamped at the following markets:

Boston, Massachusetts	Kansas City, Missouri
New York, N.Y.	Omaha, Nebr.
Philadelphia, Pa.	St. Joseph, Mo.
Washington, D.C.	Topeka, Kans.
Chicago, Ill.	Sioux City, Ia.

It was fully demonstrated, therefore, that:

- (1) It was practical and feasible to grade beef for commercial purposes at various markets according to the official U.S. Standards.
- (2) Beef could be so marked that the consumer would not be deceived in his purchase.
- (3) Selling meat on the basis of grade made it possible to sell cattle on the same basis. This would aid the producer in planning his breeding and feeding operations more intelligently.
- (4) Subject to the law of supply and demand the price of beef would be influenced by its relative merits.
- (5) Grading and stamping prevented substitution and deception.

On July 1, 1928 the grading and stamping project was discontinued as an experiment but continued as a service project. At this time, therefore, a service charge of \$2.00 per hour was required from all agencies requesting the service. Government agencies were required to pay the cost of the service as heretofore by transferring funds from their own appropriation to this meat grading fund, out of which part of the salaries and expenses of the meat graders were paid. The funds from government agencies together with the funds appropriated for marketing and distribution of farm products under the Farm Products Inspection Act, were used to defray the expenses of the service. The fees collected from commercial concerns were required to be turned into the Treasury and, therefore, could not be used. This arrangement permitted the continuance of the service through the fiscal year 1928-29. During the latter part of the year, however, the U.S. Shipping

Board, one of the larger users of the service, sold most of their ships to private companies. These companies retained the meat grading service but the fees they paid for it had to be turned into the Treasury. This action, in effect, resulted in a reduction of funds for paying salaries and other expenses without a corresponding reduction of services rendered. It was necessary, therefore, to make different arrangements the following year. To avoid curtailment of the service, the National Live Stock and Meat Board agreed to cooperate with the government to provide salaries for the graders who were grading beef for the steamship companies. Under the cooperative agreement between the Bureau and the Board, the Board received all money from August 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930, for the beef grading and stamping service rendered by four graders and held it as a trust fund to be used as part payment of the salaries of those graders. These graders were stationed at New York, Chicago, Kansas City and Omaha.

Fifty percent of the four graders' salaries and \$30.00 per month of a clerk's salary were paid from the Board's beef grading and stamping fund. The Bureau paid the remainder of the salaries and expenses of these graders for services rendered in connection with the "general" meat grading service. The Bureau collected the money from that source and all that was paid by commercial interests was turned into the Treasury. The balance was in the form of a refund to the Bureau by the government agency receiving the service.

Although there was no expansion in the number of stations the second year, there was a substantial increase in the amount of beef graded. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1930 (the first year of the cooperative agreement with the Board), 38,372,056 pounds were graded. This was an increase of 6,652,365 pounds. The total cost of the beef grading and

stamping service, not including the salaries and traveling expenses of the staff at Washington, was \$10,752.89. The refunds from the Federal agencies of \$4,465.10 and the fees paid into the treasury of the Board were \$7,619.50, a total of \$12,084.60, or \$1,323.70 in excess of the money spent for the service. In other words, the refund from Federal agencies and the fees collected by the Board were more than required for conducting the service. This excess was used the following year for expansion of the service.

Congress appropriated \$20,000 for extension of the service because of the urgent demand for the grading service at other points. The following year, 1930-31, the service was extended to include the cities of St. Louis, Missouri; Buffalo, New York; Erie, Pennsylvania; Sioux City, Iowa; Detroit, Michigan; Wichita, Kansas. The grading at seven additional stations and the growth of the service resulted in an increase in the tonnage of beef graded and stamped of 110 percent over the previous year. However, a more accurate result of the increased demand for the service was manifested in the volume graded in four of the ten large cities where it was started in 1927. The tonnage at the four markets (New York, Chicago, Kansas City, and Omaha) where the Board and the Bureau were cooperating under a special agreement furnished a true test of the official standards and indicated the demand for graded and stamped beef. The volume graded increased from 46,887,794 pounds to 66,977,905 pounds, or 42.8 percent, in those four cities. Although three-fourths of the salaries of four graders, plus \$30.00 per month for clerical help, was paid out of the fund, there still remained a balance of \$1,599.00 in the Board fund.

In addition to the increased demand for beef grading, there were also requests that other meats be included; consequently the grading and stamping service was extended to include lamb and veal. The increased demand at a time of severe depression throughout the country indicated that the U.S. Standards for Grades of Beef were not only workable but were being uniformly and satisfactorily applied.

Because of financial conditions of the U.S. Treasury, all bureaus of the government were required to return to the Treasury a certain percentage of their appropriations during the year 1931-32. The meat grading service was requested to return to the Treasury an amount equivalent to that which the Bureau spent on the cooperative beef grading work. Heretofore no money that was collected for beef grading in connection with the cooperative agreement had been returned to the Treasury. In order to prevent a severe curtailment of the meat grading service due to this requirement of the Treasury, the Board was requested to pay out of the fund it collected all of the salaries of four meat graders for that year except \$360.00 per year for each of the four graders, plus the clerical cost and other incidental expenses, not to exceed \$500 per year. The Bureau paid \$360 per annum of the salary of each of the four graders and all other expenses, including overhead and supervision. The Board was requested to submit a check monthly, drawn on the beef grading fund to the disbursing clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture. This check cleared through the office of the Livestock, Meats and Wool Division and was that part of the salaries paid by the Bureau. This, in effect, was the equivalent of the Bureau turning into the Treasury 100 percent of the salaries it paid for the cooperative beef grading and stamping service.

June 30, 1932 marked the end of five years of beef grading and stamping service. At that time 27 qualified meat graders were used in the service. Ten were trained beef graders spending practically all of their time grading and stamping beef. Seven spent most of their time grading other meats and ten others were meat market reporters or meat market specialists who were thoroughly familiar with meat grades and who devoted part time to the meat and beef grading work. Meat and beef graders were located at Washington, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Wichita, Omaha, Sioux City, and San Francisco. The beef graders, paid jointly by the government and the Livestock and Meat Board, had been increased from four to five that year. While the Bureau paid a small part of the salary of these five men, the Board remitted to the U.S. Treasury an amount equal to the salary paid by the Bureau. Therefore, in effect, the entire salaries of these men were paid from the fees received by the Board.

The total tonnage of beef graded and stamped for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1932 was 184,504,869 pounds, or 78 percent larger than the previous fiscal year.

At the close of the fifth year, the beef grading and stamping project had become a firmly established service with excellent prospects of a continuous rapid growth. The following table shows the amount of beef graded and stamped and the cost per 100 pounds by years since the beginning of the service.

Fiscal year	Total beef graded	Percent Carcasses	Percent Quarters	Percent Cuts	Approximate net cost	Cost per 100 lbs. (cents)
1927 ^{1/}	4,332,359	98.7	1.0	.3	\$ 2,000.00	4.6
1928	32,952,700	96.4	2.2	1.4	7,000.00	2.1
1929	31,719,691	52.0	35.1	12.9	6,900.00	2.2
1930	48,549,579	41.3	42.4	16.3	8,000.00	1.6
1931	103,518,300	64.3	24.1	11.1	16,867.50	1.6
1932 ^{2/}	184,504,869	75.2	17.1	7.7	26,936.41	1.5

^{1/} Two months only

^{2/} Estimated June 1932 to be the same as May 1932

Lamb and Veal Graded and Stamped

<u>Fiscal</u> <u>year</u>	<u>Lamb</u> <u>(pounds)</u>	<u>Veal</u> <u>(pounds)</u>
1931	424,259	1,210
1932	3,286,111	73,780

These data illustrate the steady increased demand for graded beef and also shows that the cost of the service to those requesting it was exceedingly low and really not significant as an argument against government grading.

As the work developed, a few problems arose that were not apparent at the beginning. In some areas there was a distinct prejudice against the use of the word "heifer" on beef carcasses; retailers reported difficulty in selling their beef when the word "heifer" was stamped on it. In an attempt to correct this difficulty, especially with beef from young cattle, the beef grades were revised and grades for yearling beef were prepared. These standards were published in Circular 208, February 1932, and remained in force until 1939, at which time a single standard for all beef was adopted. This standard included beef from steers and heifers that in general were twelve to sixteen months of age at time of slaughter. Although the yearling standard was established for the purpose of greater uniformity, and to eliminate the use of the word "heifer" on such beef, it imposed upon the graders a duty that was extremely difficult and at times impossible. By specifying age limits, it required government graders to determine ages of animals at the time of slaughter. In other words, they were required to separate yearling carcasses and cuts from carcasses that were not yearlings. This could be done within certain limits, generally from the color and hardness of

the bones, size of buttons in chine bones and color of cut surface of some muscles. However, such characteristics were not always an accurate means of age determination. This resulted in irregular age determinations, complaints and confusion.

The beef grading and stamping continued its rapid expansion through the years 1933-34 but decreased in 1935 approximately 4 percent. This decline may have been caused by two principal factors:

- (1) a decline of 27 1/2 percent in the number of steers slaughtered under Federal inspection for the first quarter as compared with the number slaughtered for the same period of the previous year.
- (2) scarcity of high grade beef due to severe drouth and short feed crops in 1934. The grading service was generally requested on the higher grades of beef.-

During 1934 severe drouth and dust storms caused such a decrease in crop production that it materially affected the volume of high grade beef in areas where large numbers of cattle are usually finished for market. The decline in volume would have been much greater had it not been for three compensating factors: (1) The city of Seattle, Washington, by a vote of the people, inaugurated compulsory grading according to U.S. official standards of all meat sold in the city and requested that the Bureau supervise the work. (2) Substantial increases in lamb and veal carcass grading. (3) An extension of the service to include high grade sausage.

The volume of lamb grading was increased from 7,799,546 pounds to 13,417,762 pounds and veal from 1,731,225 pounds to 2,298,805 pounds in 1934-35 as compared with the volume graded in 1933-34.

The grading of high quality sausage products was started in response to demands from sausage manufacturers who were having difficulty in merchandising their product when competing with manufacturers making a low grade product. The grading service caused an increase of sausage sold by those requesting the service from 20 to 100 percent. The Bureau was requested to grade only those products eligible to be labeled U.S. No. 1 grade.

In 1935-36 the service was extended to the following cities: Los Angeles, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Wheeling, West Virginia; Columbus, Ohio; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; St. Paul, Minnesota; and St. Joseph, Missouri. It was withdrawn from Albany and Kingston but expanded at New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Kansas City by adding additional graders. In expanding the service, it was necessary that the demand be large enough for the revenue (fees) collected to be equal to the cost of doing the work. A marked increase in volume of graded and stamped meat of all kinds was shown, with the largest increases being for beef and sausage.

The volume of beef graded during 1936-37 again suffered a slight decline for the same reasons as explained for the decline in 1934-35. Another drouth in 1936 reduced the number of cattle slaughtered and in connection with this reduction was a reduction in the quality of the beef sold.

During 1937-38 another problem was recognized as being a confusing factor in the grading and stamping of beef that was of little consequence in the early development of the service. As the benefits of the grading and stamping service became evident to the packers, they adopted the

same practice, each company using its own grade names and the so-called Institute standards. These standards were represented by ten distinct and separate grades whereas the government specifications were based on seven grades. The extensive use of two separate standards with each packer using different grade names for Prime, Choice, Good, and Commercial grades of meat caused much confusion among consumers. Most consumers did not know the significance of these trade names in relation to the government grades and many were not entirely clear with reference to the government grade standards. The use of two standards and the multiple number of grade names convinced both the producer and the government representatives that a revision of the official standards would aid in promoting a broader demand for the government's grading and stamping service. The producers were firmly of the opinion that the benefits they derived from the service was in direct proportion to the total tonnage of meat graded. They were in sympathy with any movement that would increase the volume. This movement was sponsored primarily by the American National Livestock Association and the National Live Stock and Meat Board.

The American National Livestock Association passed a resolution suggesting that the government and a committee of the Institute of American Meat Packers attempt to develop a unified single standard for beef grades that would be acceptable to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the industry. This resulted in a conference between the two agencies in April 1938. It was brought out in this conference that, while the ten grade system was believed necessary for wholesale trading, it was too refined for practical use in retail trading because some of the differences between beef carcasses could not be distinguished in the wholesale and

retail cuts. Furthermore, retailers would find it difficult and impractical to handle a single grade consistently under changing conditions with respect to supply and demand, if the ten grades were recognized. Retailers also considered essential ready access to a dependable supply of a particular grade if there was to be any advantage to them in selling meat by grade or encouraging their customers to buy on a grade basis.

A sub-committee was thus appointed to develop proposed changes in the Institute grade standards and in the official standards that would provide for (1) wholesale grades sufficiently refined that when combined with class and weight they would be entirely practical for wholesale trading in beef. (2) retail grades of sufficient refinement to show perceptible grade differences between identical retail cuts and provide consumers with a dependable guide by which they could select meats according to grade or quality. In the proposed revision of the standards, W. O. Fraser and C. W. Kitchen cooperated with the representatives of the committee from the Institute of American Meat Packers.

It was first decided by this committee that steer and heifer beef could be graded by a single standard as beef because there was practically no difference in it from the standpoint of consumer. This would make possible the elimination of the words in the standards of Steer, Heifer, and Yearling. The class terms of "Yearling" and "Heifer" were objectionable. The word "Heifer" on carcasses made them more difficult to merchandise in some sections. The term "Yearling", which had caused complaints and much confusion because graders were required to stamp steer and heifer carcasses that were not yearling as such and other steer and heifer carcasses as yearling.

This led to a consideration of cow beef. If steer and heifer beef could be graded as beef without reference to age and sex, would the same apply to cow carcasses? Opinions were divided on this point, both in the committee and also in the open meeting. It was the opinion of some that if steer and heifer beef could be designated as beef without reference to sex, it was logical and consistent to include cow carcasses in the same single standard. Others had an entirely opposite view. They believed that because cow beef was usually from animals that were fully mature at time of slaughter and that steers and heifers were not, there would be a distinct difference in the beef between the two, due to a difference in age and also differences in conformation, finish, and quality. Such action would violate the cardinal principle on which the original standards had been based; namely, uniformity of characteristics. The elimination of class would also prevent a close correlation between the live animals and a particular grade of beef carcass. In other words, commercial beef from old cows and young steers and heifers would be decidedly different from almost all important considerations. The committee finally agreed to the revision of the beef grade standards and included the single standard for steer, heifer and cow beef in their report.

On November 29, 1938 a meeting was held in Chicago. The Committee's report was submitted, discussed and accepted without material changes. Although the proposed revised beef grade standards differed from the previous official standards which required a separate standard for each class, beef produced from cows was not eligible to be graded Prime or Choice, and only beef from the relatively young beef-type cows was eligible to be graded Good. The same essential grade factors, conformation,

List of Representatives Attending the Informal Hearing on
the Subject of Beef Grading Held at the Palmer House
Tuesday, November 29, 1938

Livestock Producers

Representing the American National Livestock Association:

C. J. Abbott	Nebraska
Henry G. Boice	Arizona
J. Elmer Brock	Wyoming
F. E. Mollin, Secretary,	American National
	Livestock Association
Hubbard Russell	California
A. A. Smith	Colorado
Jay Taylor	Texas

Livestock Commission Agencies

(1) Representing the National Livestock Exchange:

Paul G. Adams, Executive Vice President

(2) Representing the National Livestock Marketing Association:

H. M. Conway, Director of Research

Meat Packers

Representing the Institute of American Meat Packers:

Walter Netsch	Armour and Company
William Diesing	The Cudahy Packing Company
Walter Pepler	Cudahy Brothers Company
V. A. Gibbs	John Morrell and Company
Ray S. Paul	The Rath Packing Company
A. L. Scott	Swift and Company
F. M. Simpson	Swift and Company
C. R. Hood	Wilson and Company, Inc.
G. B. Thorne	Wilson and Company, Inc.
H. R. Davison	Institute of American Meat Packers
George M. Lewis	Institute of American Meat Packers

Retail Organizations

(1) Representing the National Association of Retail Meat Dealers:

A. J. Kaiser, Chairman, Board of Directors
Geo. A. Steindl, President
John A. Kotal, Executive Secretary
I. W. Ringer

(2) Representing chain store organizations:

T. A. Connors	A & P Tea Company
F. M. Kasch	Jewel Food Stores

Consumer Groups and Educational Organizations

Mrs. Colice Belester, Executive Secretary, United Conference
Against the High Cost of Living

Mr. G. W. Hervey, Consumers' Counsel Director, United States
Department of Agriculture

Miss Inez Crouch, Assistant Home Economist,
University of Illinois

Miss Jessie Alice Cline, University of Missouri

Miss Ida E. Ratzloff, Graduate Student, Consumer Education,
University of Chicago

Miss Frances L. Swain, Director of Home Economics, Chicago
Public Schools

United States Department of Agriculture

C. W. Kitchen
W. O. Fraser

National Live Stock and Meat Board

R. C. Pollock
Inez Wilson

Advertising Agency

R. E. Sandmeyer, Wadsworth, Illinois

finish and quality were retained and no change in the number of grades was made. Slight changes in the specifications for both the U.S. official grades and also the Institute grades were agreed upon so that there would be a closer relationship between the two. Some of the grade names were changed; namely, Medium was changed to Commercial, Plain to Utility, and Low Cutter to Canner. The names of the highest grades, Prime, Choice and Good were not changed. The accompanying chart shows the relationship between the two sets of standards.

The adoption of the single standard for all beef also simplified the purchasing of meat by the consumer because it made it unnecessary for them to be familiar with the relative merits of each class. They could select beef by knowing the quality of beef represented by the various grade names. After the government had given full consideration to the proposed revisions, and all changes were made, the Secretary of Agriculture promulgated them as the Official U.S. Standards to become effective July 16, 1939.

On July 1, 1939 a change was made in the cooperative agreement between the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the National Live Stock and Meat Board. In order to simplify operations and accounting procedure for the collection of fees and payment of salaries and expenses incurred in connection with all of the grading and inspection work conducted by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on a fee basis, arrangements were made to establish a meat grading trust fund account in the Federal Treasury. Fees could be deposited and salaries and expenses could be paid from this fund. This procedure provided a means of paying a grader's salary in one check instead of two, every two weeks. The new

arrangement provided for the transfer of the meat grading fund from the Board trust fund account to the trust fund account of the Federal Treasury, with the same flexibility in the use of the funds as before. However, this arrangement did not terminate the cooperative agreement with the Board.

Under the provisions of the Agricultural Appropriation Act for the fiscal year 1940, the grading, stamping and certification service was transferred from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This became effective July 1, 1939. The Board's agreement was with the Agricultural Marketing Service instead of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics from this date.

The meat grading program had developed to enormous proportions and each year the demand for the service was greater than it had been the previous year. This was significant in view of the fact that the service had been developed with an insignificant amount of funds appropriated by Congress.

On June 30, 1939 (May and June estimated to be the same as April), the tonnage of all meat, including lard graded during the fiscal year 1938-39, was 653,141,945 pounds. This was accomplished at twenty-four of the leading cities throughout the country. The cost of this service, paid for by those who requested it, was as follows:

Financial Statement

Meat Grading and Stamping -- under cooperative agreement
July 1, 1938 - June 30, 1939

(Salaries <u>1/</u>	\$87,108.91
(Refund, graders <u>2/</u>	16,346.83
(Misc. Expense	
Paid by Board (Clerk hire	
(postage, tax	
(on checks*	938.76
Total	104,394.50
Received by Board (July-April	126,000.67
(still due	1,302.54
Total	127,303.21
Accumulated during	
Fiscal Year 1939	22,908.71
On hand 7/1/38	26,255.48
Total	49,164.19
Less check sent	
and received	47,000.00
Balance in Board Treasury July 1,	
1939 - est.	2,164.19

* May and June Est.

- 1/ Includes that part of salaries of cooperative graders paid by Board from fees collected.
- 2/ Amount of salaries of cooperative graders paid originally by Bureau and refunded to the Bureau by the Board out of fees collected.

The total estimated expenses of the meat grading project by the Board and the Bureau for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1939 amounted to \$177,235. The total estimated receipts from all sources by both for the same period amounted to \$183,628.95, making a net profit for the entire meat grading project of \$6,393.95. Of the \$49,164.19 in the treasury of the Board, \$47,000 was transferred to the Trust Fund account in the Federal treasury under the new arrangement to be used to finance and extend the meat grading and stamping service.

The percentage distribution by classes and grades of beef graded ^{1/} for the fiscal years 1937-38 and 1938-39 ^{2/} is of interest.

Percent of Grades by Classes

	<u>Prime</u>	<u>Choice</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Plain</u>	<u>Cutter</u>	<u>Cutter</u> <u>(low)</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Steers</u>								
1939	5.2	51.2	34.1	7.6	1.5	.1		67.5
1938	5.8	51.1	34.4	7.2	1.1	.3		64.8
<u>Heifers</u>								
1939	.7	38.7	45.2	12.6	2.6	.2		22.5
1938	1.4	39.9	43.4	12.9	1.9	.4		25.8
<u>Cows</u>								
1939		.2	21.6	30.8	24.5	18.9	4.0	9.0
1938		.8	34.7	25.8	19.3	15.3	4.1	6.6
<u>Unclassified</u>								
1939								.9
1938								2.7

^{1/} National Livestock and Meat Board Cooperating

^{2/} Total ten months. Percent of total based on rounded numbers.

In 1940 the service was extended to several cities not previously using the service. Those included Albert Lea and Austin, Minnesota, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Richmond, Virginia. The examination of contract deliveries was also extended to a number of other agencies that had not previously availed themselves of the service.

The quantity of meat graded during 1940 exceeded that of 1939 by 12 percent and that of every other year except 1938. The quantity of beef graded and stamped, however, was more than was graded and stamped in any previous year.

The substantial increase in the quantity that was graded Good is significant. This trend was particularly apparent on the West Coast. The percentages of the three higher grades at Los Angeles, for example, were Choice-6 percent, Good-72 percent and Commercial-20 percent.

During this year nine full-time graders were added to the grading staff, making a total of 58 full-time graders and seven part-time graders as of December 31, 1940.

In the calendar year of 1941 there was 33 percent more meat and meat products graded and stamped than during the previous. The total was 2,868,117,000 pounds and this was exclusive of approximately 670 million pounds accepted in connection with the Lend-Lease Program. The reasons given for this greatly increased tonnage were (1) larger percentage than usual of the higher grades of beef; (2) Lend-Lease Program extension of the service to points where it had been impractical to maintain the service before; (3) increased demand for graded meat on the part of users of the service.

The Lend-Lease Program was started May 1, 1941; the responsibility for examining the products purchased was assigned to the Meat Grading Service. This consisted of supervising the selection, processing and packaging of the product and accepting it for the account of the Government. About 75 men were employed for this work alone. The amount of meats and meat products certified on Lend-Lease purchases for the eight months of 1941 totaled 670,645,708 pounds. This consisted of cured pork, canned meats, lard and other miscellaneous meats. This service had a phenomenal growth. By June 30, 1942, the total amount certified since the beginning in May 1941 was nearly 1 3/4 billion pounds. At the close of the year the total number of meat graders had increased to 224, 140 of whom were temporary employees who were certifying the Government-purchased meat.

The total tonnage of all meat, graded and stamped and certified for Government purchase exceeded 2 1/2 billion pounds.

The accompanying chart shows the amount of beef graded through the years 1928-41.

The meat grading service became one of the most important activities of the Government during the period July 1942 to June 30, 1944. The increased Lend-Lease purchases and demands of the War Shipping Administration at ports of embarkation increased the demand for the service tremendously.

In addition to the demand for service on a voluntary basis, there was an enormous increased demand when grading service became mandatory. The successive releases of regulations issued by the Office of Price Administration during the latter part of 1942 required a very large increase in personnel and much more supervision. These releases were as follows:

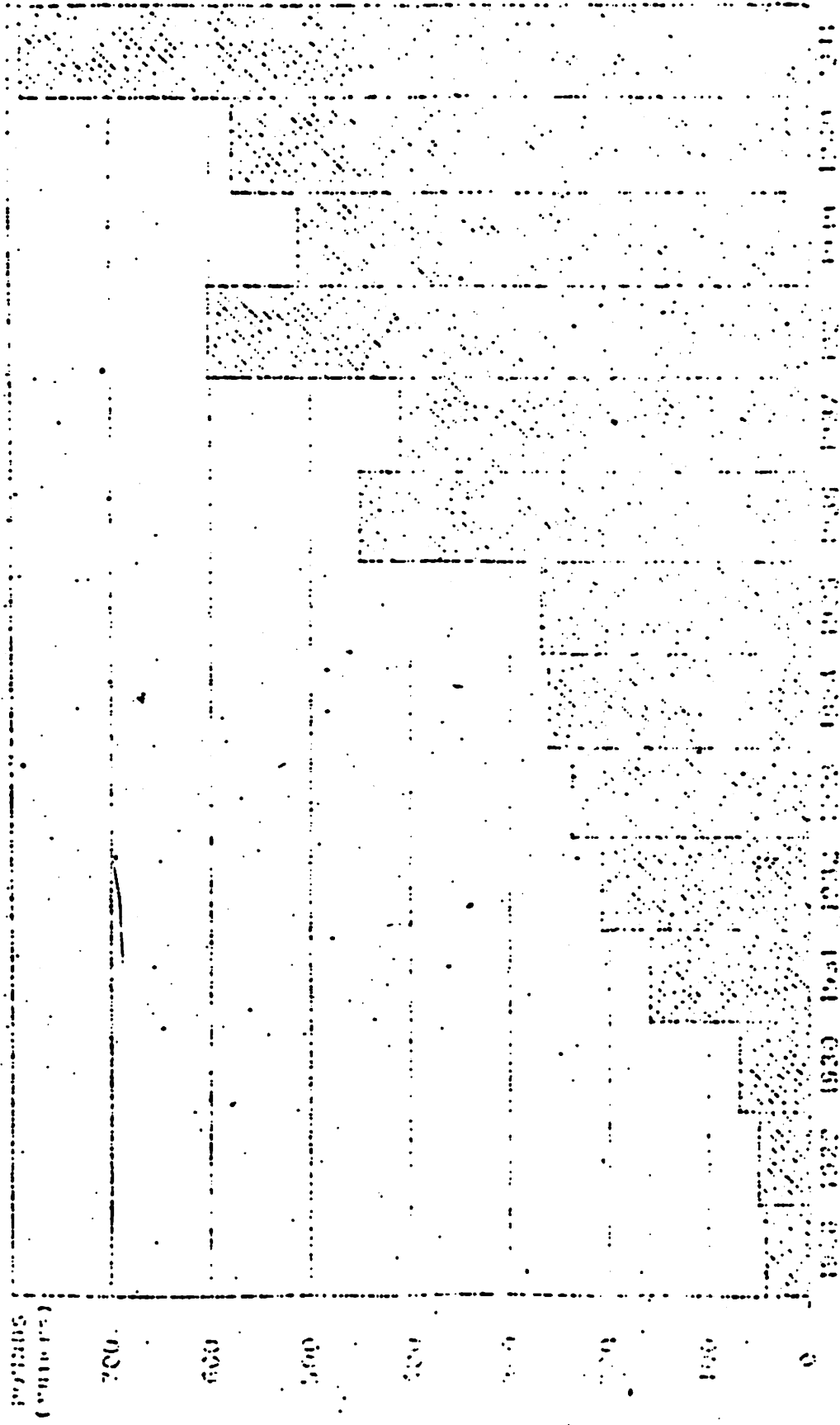
(1) Effective July 13, 1942, all meat vendors were required to grade and letter-stamp their beef and veal in accordance with the U.S. Standards.

(2) Mandatory grading by official graders of all Choice grade beef (Prime included in Choice grade) and veal, irrespective of whether Federally or non-Federally inspected slaughter, became effective September 18, 1942.

(3) Mandatory grading and stamping by official graders of all Good, Commercial, and Utility grades of beef of Federally and non-Federally inspected slaughter became effective December 16, 1942.

(4) Mandatory grading by meat interests in general by alphabetical symbols for lamb, yearling mutton and mature mutton as directed by OPA in lieu of U.S. grade designation became effective December 23, 1942.

BEEF GRADED, CALENDAR YEARS, 1928-41



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

(5) Mandatory grading by official graders of all Cutter and Canner grades of beef and of Good, Commercial, Utility and Cull grades of veal Federally or non-Federally inspected slaughter became effective April 1943.

(6) Mandatory grading and stamping by official graders according to U.S. official standards in accordance with the maximum price ceilings of the OPA for all grades of lamb, yearling and mutton carcasses of Federally and non-Federally inspected slaughter became effective April 10, 1943.

(Mandatory grading out October 15, 1946. Rationing of meat terminated effective 12:01 a.m. November 24, 1946.)

The placement of personnel in widely separated rural and otherwise remote meat producing and merchandising communities was necessary in order to make the grading service available to slaughterers and local butchers. Such rapid expansion caused numerous erroneous interpretations of the U.S. standards. These were reduced to a minimum, however, as soon as supervision was organized to give personal assistance as needed.

The total volume of meat graded corresponded to the enormous expansion of the service. The volume graded, exclusive of the amount certified for the Commodity Credit Corporation, of beef, veal, lamb and mutton amounted to 4,449,045,000 pounds as compared with 998,925,000 pounds the previous year. This was an increase of 3,529,299,469 pounds, or 353 percent.

The striking increased volume of graded veal, lamb and mutton for this period over the previous years was due to the fact that comparatively few requests for lamb and veal grading were received when the service was on a voluntary basis.

The data on grade distribution of beef became significant when the entire slaughter was graded. Prior to this time when the grading service was on a voluntary basis, most of the grading was confined to the higher grades; therefore, the percentages of beef of those grades were high. It was somewhat lower on a mandatory basis but still considerably higher than had been previously estimated as shown in the last column of the table.

Distribution of beef graded according to grades
Calendar years 1939-1942

Grades	Thousand pounds				Percentage			
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1939	1940	1941	1942
Prime	10,523	11,613	13,410	1/	2.0	2.0	1.7	--
Choice	232,504	229,867	308,234	439,831	45.4	39.7	39.0	28.7
Good	176,092	233,613	343,189	560,304	34.4	40.4	43.5	37.9
Commercial	54,636	69,358	85,894	284,083	10.7	12.0	10.9	19.2
Utility	28,459	24,654	26,254	172,991	5.6	4.3	3.3	11.7
Cutter	5,929	6,971	9,584	14,118	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.0
Canner	1,266	2,224	3,201	6,857	.2	.4	.4	.5
Not specified	2,607	137	120	284	.5	.0	.0	--
Total	512,017	578,437	789,856	1478,468				

1/ To conform with OPA regulations Prime beef was graded Choice and tabulated with Choice beef.

The 1942 tonnage for beef graded shows an increase of 187 percent over the amount for the previous year, exclusive of that graded for CCC. The government graded and certified and accepted for the account of CCC purchase was 2,441,240,844 pounds compared with 1,641,708,837 pounds for the previous fiscal year, or an increase of 49 percent.

During the year 1943-1944 the mandatory orders extended the meat grading service to numerous new sections. It was marked by decidedly better acceptance and understanding by both the processors and consumers. The service was extended to 16 additional sections, most of which were in the southeastern states, including North and South Carolina, Georgia,

Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. The other points were Sacramento, California, Havana, Cuba, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Thus the service has been extended to 66 regular grading stations, 101 sub-stations and two islands.

Hundreds of other small towns where they could be reached from either the principal stations or sub-stations were included. The number of graders was increased from 523 to 683. Of this number, 360 devoted full time to the commercial grading and 201 were engaged in Commodity Credit (Lend-Lease) work and 122 assisted with both the commercial and CCC grading activities. The supervision force consists of three national and nine regional grading supervisors. These men are charged with the responsibility of maintaining uniformity in the application of the official standards.

During this year the total amount of meat, meat food products and by-products regularly graded or certified and accepted was 10,111,589,000 pounds. This represented an increase of 5,662,544,000 pounds graded and certified during 1942-43.

In addition to this immense quantity graded or certified for grade throughout the United States, there was also 3,495,986,544 pounds of meat, meat products, and by-products certified and accepted for this account of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). This consisted of all kinds of meat, much of which was pork and pork products.

One of the most outstanding results of this volume grading with such a large increase in grading force was the small number of serious complaints received. As a rule the workability of the standards and the accuracy with which they are applied may be measured by the number of requests received for appeal grading. It was a remarkable record that a

total of only forth-three appeal gradings were requested throughout the nation during the year. This not only proves that meat can be graded by the U.S. Standards in all sections of the United States but also can be done satisfactorily when enormous quantities are graded by men who have not been grading meat by the U.S. Standards prior to their recent employment.

In view of the fact that it has been conclusively demonstrated that beef, lamb, mutton and veal have been graded satisfactorily throughout the country according to the U.S. official standards, it is believed that these standards will continue to be universally used after the war emergency has passed.

They not only have been necessary through the difficult food rationing period but will prove to be an economic and foreign trade necessity in the future. Consumers, trade interests, and producers alike have experienced the benefits of the use of uniform standards and since these standards have been applied in all sections of the country with a reasonably high degree of accuracy, they are becoming firmly established at all markets. It is probably that revisions will be required to establish more definite deviation lines between the grades and also their use may cease to be mandatory but their use as the official grade standards will continue.

In conclusion, there were three important developments required in the adoption of uniform standards:

- (1) The need for a uniform meat grading service was realized by consumers, producers, and others and they demanded such a service.
- (2) The preparation of a set of grade standards for beef that was accepted by the livestock and meat industry that was workable and could

be applied with accuracy at a very low cost.

(3) Complete cooperation with a national organization (The National Live Stock and Meat Board) that fully understood the educational requirements of putting the official standards into practical use. The constant distribution of educational, informative information to all interests was invaluable in the universal establishment of the Federal grades.